Ogyû Sorai, Matsudaira Sadanobu and the Kansei Worship of Confucius

James McMullen

It is an honour to be invited to Kokushikan University. I am grateful to the personal good offices of Professor Eiji Takemura, a scholar who, with his writing in both Japanese and English, has made a notable contribution to historical understanding of thought in nineteenth-century Japan. I would like also to thank Professor Kate Nakai for her kind words of introduction.*1

Introduction

Ogyû Sorai 荻生徂徠 (1666-1728) must be the most studied of Japanese Confucian thinkers. Today, I wish to look at his thought through its influence on practice, to explore, and to attempt to identify, its impact on an important episode in later Tokugawa period history, the Kansei 寛政 Reform (1787-1800)*2. I shall be concerned not with the reform as a whole, but with one particular aspect: the reform and revival of the cult of Confucius. Sorai's thought was in great part practical rather than speculative in spirit. It was intended to be the basis for an intervention in the society of his own time, and it is reasonable to enquire into how it was applied in practice. I shall be concerned with a major figure of some hundred years after Sorai, Matsudaira Sadanobu 松平定信 (1758-1829), whose leadership and implementation of the important Kansei Reform was, I shall endeavour to argue, deeply influenced by Sorai. Intellectual influence, unless openly and explicitly acknowledged, is hard to demonstrate. Such evidence as I shall produce today is in part circumstantial. The argument put forward here is cautious; it might perhaps better be described as an exploration than a claim.

As all with a basic knowledge of Japanese history will know, this is, at first sight at least, a paradoxical argument. As it is surely unnecessary to remind you, the Kansei Reform is associated with the well-known 'Kansei prohibition on heterodoxy' (*Kansei igaku no kin* 寛政異学の禁), a measure which established Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130-1200) Neo-Confucianism as the exclusive orthodoxy of the Shôheizaka gakumonjo 昌平坂学問所 (hereafter called the 'Bakufu College') in 1790. It is claimed that the prohibition was motivated by the desire to suppress the influence of Sorai. Sorai himself, moreover, was very critical of Zhu Xi Neo-Confucianism, and, on the surface of it, would seem unlikely ever to have approved its choice as an official orthodoxy. Here is indeed a paradox. How is it possible to interpret as 'influence' a measure that flatly contradicts the declared preferences of the figure to whom the influence is attributed?

To explore this paradox will necessitate excursions into two different fields: first, briefly, the thought of Sorai himself; and then, at greater length, the historical reform of the final decade of the eighteenth century. I should also add that I shall be focussing on one particular aspect, albeit arguably the most symbolic and important one, of the reform. Chronologically, this came last, in 1800: it was the liturgical reform or reconstruction of the ceremony to venerate Confucius, the

sekiten 釋奠 (also referred to as *sekisai* 釋菜 ; in Chinese these terms are read as *shidian* and *shicai* respectively) ceremony. I shall be returning to this subject in just a moment.

Ogyû Sorai

First, however, let me say that, as a latecomer to intensive study of his thought, I am diffident over talking about Sorai in front of experts. He is a thinker of great erudition and subtlety, whose thought really requires a lifetime even to begin to understand adequately and without fear of distortion. However, he is also the most prominent of the Tokugawa Confucians. Indeed, I believe that there have been more than 200 scholarly books and articles on him in the last few decades. He has attracted the scholarly interest of some of the most brilliant Japanese scholars since the war. No one seriously interested in Tokugawa intellectual history can ignore his presence or deny his historical importance. He is also claimed to have exerted an abiding influence on modern Japanese political thought.

Sorai is a brilliant thinker. His achievements are justly celebrated. Part of his intention was to historicize Confucian social and political institutions, to argue that they were human creations addressed to particular historical situations. In practice, as commentators, including the great Maruyama Masao 丸山眞男 have noted, this could undermine their authority. It is this aspect of Sorai's ideas that I want to explore tonight with reference to the Kansei Reform. But before looking at this episode, it is useful first to consider the general character of Sorai's thought and more particularly his attitude to the religious aspect of Confucianism. After consideration of his work, especially his *Rongo chô* 論語徵 , I came to the conclusion that Sorai's is what might be called an 'authoritarian managerial utilitarian'. He consolidated a view of morality found elsewhere in East Asian moral thought: Sorai, it can be argued, took what philosophers call a 'consequentialist' view of ethics. That is to say that actions were good not because they were intrinsically so, but because they produced good consequences. This led him to the view that acts are moral that bring benefit, or contentment, or at least an absence of anxiety, to people; and the more people so benefited, the more effective, morally speaking, the action. This is recognisable as the view of morality characteristic of those philosophers in the west commonly called 'utilitarians'. They believe in the 'greatest happiness of the greatest number'. This might at first seem an attractive and persuasive view of morality, but there is of course a downside. If acts have no moral status in themselves, any act, even an apparently destructive one by conventional standards, as long as it produces appropriate happiness, is 'good'.

In Sorai's thought we find that the Confucian virtues such as benevolence are artificial creations by men of great wisdom, invented to maximise peace and contentment. Conversely, even the taking of human life may be considered good. Lies and manipulations on the part of those in authority are also acceptable in principle, provided that their consequences are good. Apparent inconsistencies also do not matter. Sorai believed that religious worship was of this kind; it was instituted by men of wisdom to procure the desired end of the happiness of the greatest number. The worship of spirits, quite aside from whether they really existed or not, was a 'technique' (*jutsu* 術), or, to give it a pejorative nuance in English, a 'manipulation'.

The utilitarian or consequentialist view stands in contrast to what philosophers call the 'deontological' view, which holds that actions are right in themselves. The latter belief, it is fairly obvious, will be characteristic of most religious morality. It was certainly true of the prevailing form of Confucianism of Sorai's day, usually called Neo-Confucianism. This tradition held that the

Confucian virtues such as benevolence, righteousness, ritual propriety, wisdom and good faith, were binding because they were a part of the structure of the world; they were eternal and invariant. Moreover, they were part of the natural order, and they were thus also part of human nature. What was necessary was for men to discover and act out these moral imperatives in their family and social lives. If they did so, a harmonious and happy society would be achieved, and nature itself would function harmoniously.

Sorai was, as is generally known, highly critical of the Neo-Confucianist doctrines of the relationship of morality to the natural order; its soteriology or imperative to self cultivation. Its goal of self realization through self cultivation was, he believed, impracticable and mistaken. Sorai was particularly critical of the place of Mencius (Môshi 孟子 ; 371-289 BCE) in Neo-Confucian teaching. From Sorai's point of view, Mencius was a negative influence on the development of the tradition. His concept of the individual as capable of making his own subjective judgements was a misunderstanding of the true nature of the tradition. The result was a teaching that encouraged unrealistic views; it promoted disputaciousness and arbitrary judgements. It could not promote the disciplined unity of society that Sorai considered desirable. The true Confucian way, he proclaimed, consisted not of self-cultivation in pursuit of an illusory goal, but of objective institutions enforced by political authority. These institutions had been created by men of superordinate ability in ancient China. The minds of these men were inaccessible to posterity, save to a small elite minority, those qualified by status to govern. Upon them fell the charge of implementing effective administration, if necessary by coercion, and achieving the utilitarian goal of contentment. To this end, in true utilitarian fashion, manipulations such as the use of superstition as a means to social control, were acceptable. Here lay the origin of the elite and authoritarian aspect of Sorai's political theory.

The *sekiten*

Sorai's scepticism concerning the Confucian practice of his times influenced his approach to the religious aspect of the tradition as it was observed among his contemporaries. Here, it is possible that the locution 'the religious aspect of the tradition' may occasion some surprise. Confucianism is usually considered rational and weak in terms of the supernatural and metaphysical. Indeed, when the Jesuits encountered Confucian religious ceremonies in China in the c16th and c17th, they interpreted the ritual to honour Confucius to be a secular expression of gratitude and honour. Indeed, certainly, up until very recently, this aspect of Confucianism, particularly in the West, has been largely underestimated by historians and scholars.

In fact, the *sekiten* was a very important element in the history of Confucianism throughout East Asia. It was the main visible and institutional expression of the tradition that many encountered. This ceremony, again rather little studied in modern times until very recently, was important in the Confucian world in Tokugawa Japan. It was, of course, like Confucianism itself, Chinese in origin. As a ritual, it had certain unusual properties that reflected the rational character of the tradition that it sought to sacralize. In technical terms, it was not petitionary; that is it sought no overt sublunary rewards; nor was it expiatory or apotropaeic, seeking to ward off calamity or injury. It was not soteriological, offering the promise of personal salvation in another world. Rather, it was primarily a communal, albeit elite, expression of gratitude to the sage Confucius and others in the tradition for their teachings. In its grandest versions, as for instance when the emperor himself or crown prince sacrificed, it reconciled potentially divergent or conflicting elements with

in the Chinese polity: autocratic monarchy and rational bureaucracy. It also sacralized the project of Confucian education and the values that underpinned it: a certain belief in the equality, or equality of potential, of all men; the ideal of good administration by men of virtue, their authority delegated to those similarly of virtue and talent, selected and promoted on the basis of their merit. Because the ceremony embodied these Confucian values, it may be claimed that the religious worship of Confucius in the form of this ceremony represents a kind of test of the commitment to the Confucian tradition. Authoritative performance of the ceremony constituted an acknowledgement of the authority of the Confucian world view and, naturally, with that, the imperative force of Confucian ethics and the validity of the Confucian view of the individual.

This ritual had originated relatively late in Chinese history. The ceremony derived its structure from ancient Chinese ritual procedures, but as a rite to venerate Confucius was first recorded only in the Han 漢 dynasty. It received a classic formulation in the Tang 唐 , in the official version of the ceremony prescribed in the great ritual compendium, the *Kaiyuan li* 開元礼 , of 732. In this phase of its development, the ceremony may be subsumed into what the anthropologist Catherine Bell, a modern scholar of ritual, calls the 'cosmological ordering' type of rite, which tends to be associated with the claim to power of a large-scale with a 'central monarchical figure'[*3]. This version of the ceremony was to continue to be observed, with a tendency to exalt the status of Confucius liturgically, throughout the history of imperial China. Indeed, there was even at one time a move to grant him the posthumous status of emperor. This, again, was to arouse Sorai's indignation

Some centuries later, even as the 'cosmological ordering' version of the ceremony was perpetuated, but as Confucianism itself evolved in China, the *sekiten* developed in a different direction, to become unofficial and personal. The Song Neo-Confucian revival proclaimed a 'Way' that was concerned with 'cultivating an internalized moral universe emphasizing intentionality and its expression in action'[*4]. Moreover, it is important to stress that, under Buddhist influence, it offered deep spiritual rewards, a Confucian version of enlightenment, to its followers. Its great synthesizer, Zhu Xi, drew up a liturgy that stressed the observers' personal devotion to the founder of the tradition. In Bell's typology, his version of the ceremony belongs to the 'ethical-moral' phase of ritual development. In this type, 'the major form of religious action is ethical and disciplinary in nature', here, however, with an added soteriological dimension. This was a quite different form of Confucian religiosity from that of the classic Tang ceremony for the crown prince. Zhu's version is usually called a sekisai, because of its smaller scale and possibly also because the offerings were mainly vegetable. It has liturgical features that reflect the intention to legitimize, or to sacralize, his particular interpretation of the tradition associated with the Mencian and Neo-Confucian branch of Confucianism. It achieved this by incorporating the leading figures of that tradition, particularly Mencius, Zi Si 子思 (Confucius' grandson; probably fourth century BCE; author of the *Doctrine of the Mean* [*zhong yong* 中庸]), and others including Zhu's immediate forerunners in the Neo-Confucian revival, into the liturgy, as so-called 'correlates' (*hai* 配) or 'subsidiary venerands' (*jûshi* 従祀). This, of course, was precisely the branch of the tradition that Sorai excoriated. It will be necessary to return to this theme later in the lecture.

In Japan, the ceremony was adopted, along with other institutions of Tang China, in the eighth century. It was observed both in the ancient and medieval periods, and gain, after a hiatus in the sixteenth century, in the Tokugawa period. Its history in Japan is a matter of absorbing interest, and the subject of my own research for some years now. In general, my view has been that history

demonstrates first that this ceremony tended to flourish most when it was associated with broader aspects of Chinese culture and with social, as opposed to purely religious, political or ideological functions; when it activated the Sinophile cultural reflexes that had always been characteristic of elite Japanese society. In other words, its original purpose, to sacralize the Confucian tradition through veneration of its founder, tended to be skewed in the direction of cultural and aesthetic values. Second, in a complementary trend, the worship of Confucius competed with other traditions and value systems. Its history in Japan shows that was not always successful in this competition.

Thus in ancient Japan, the 'cosmological ordering' version of the ceremony flourished to a certain extent at the imperial court and among the high aristocracy in the Nara and Heian periods. However, its popularity was achieved partly by its association with the feasting and verse composition that followed the sacrifice itself. The actual religious ceremony dwindled in importance. It became a ritual largely ignored by high authority, participation confined to men of low hereditary rank. The history of Confucian liturgy Japan was self referential, and it will be necessary, again, to return to this version of the ceremony later, in the context of Matsudaira Sadanobu's revival of the ancient ceremony.

The ceremony finally lapsed after the Ônin 応仁 wars (1467-77), but was revived during the early Tokugawa period, by the Hayashi 林 lineage in their school, the semi-official Shôheikô 昌平黌 in Edo, and by others, both as an 'unofficial' ritual in *shijuku* 私塾 and as an unofficial or semi-official ceremony in domain schools *hankô* 藩校[*5]. Initially, Zhu Xi's 'ethical-moral' unofficial version was popular, partly for reasons of scale, partly precisely because of its unofficial character. But some Japanese Confucian scholars, for instance the influential commoner Nakamura Tekisai 中村惕斎 (1629-1702), certainly emphasized its devotional aspect. As practised by the Hayashi at the Shôheikô, the ceremony, initially referred to as a *sekisai,* assumed a particular form: it adopted and adapted the liturgy of Zhu Xi's unofficial version, but was also influenced by the liturgies that had developed in ancient Japan, including lecturing after the ceremony and the composition of verses. None the less, it symbolized the commitment of the Hayashi lineage to the Zhu Xi school of Confucianism. Liturgically, the Hayashi ceremony naturally enough represented Confucius as the principal object of worship, but honoured, as well as Confucius himself, his favourite disciple Yan Hui 顔回 , Zeng zi 曾子 (Confucius' son-in-law), Zi Si, whose text, *The Doctrine of the Mean,* was strongly criticised, together with Mencius, by Sorai for privileging individual subjectivity. Even more important, it also venerated as *jûshi* or 'subsidiary venerands', six Song Dynasty Neo-Confucian subsidiary venerands , major figures in the Neo-Confucian movement (Chou Dunyi 周敦頤 (1017-73), the two Cheng 程 brothers, Mingdao 明道 (1032-86) and Yichuan 伊川 (1033-1107), Zhang Zai 張載 (1021-77), Shao Yong 邵雍 (1011-77), and Zhu Xi himself. The Hayashi liturgy thus unambiguously proclaimed the ceremony as sacralizing the Neo-Confucian interpretation of the tradition. Institutionally, the semi-official status of the school also associated Song Neo-Confucianism with the *bakufu* 幕府 itself. The representatives of this tradition were included, along with Confucius himself, in the climactic phase in the liturgy of the *sekiten* ceremony. This was the reading of the shukubun 祝文 or 'invocation', when the spirit of Confucius was directly addressed in high-flown language:

> O king, your virtue pervades Heaven and Earth; your Way transcends past and present; you compiled the Six Classics; you bequeathed a pattern for ten thousand generations.

> Respectfully, with a banner of silk and fermented wine, with grain filling the various vessels, I offer the ancient sacrifices and set forth the bright offerings.[*6]

The prayer goes on explicitly to mention the spirits of the four correlates (Yan Hui, Zeng Zi, Zi Si and Mencius), together with the six Song dynasty Neo-Confucian subsidiary venerands mentioned above. Again, it will be useful to bear in mind that Sorai was deeply hostile to this tradition.

This ritual had had an uneven history in the early and middle Tokugawa period. It was promoted by followers of the tradition, anxious to advance Confucianism in a world massively dominated by Buddhism, as a very important and visible symbol of their persuasion. Initially slow to be adopted on a large scale or to attract firm state patronage, it had been flamboyantly and grandiosely sponsored by the fifth shogun Tokugawa Tsunayoshi 徳川綱吉 (r. 1680-1709) during the Genroku 元禄 period. Tsunayoshi funded the construction of a grand shrine in Edo, the forerunner of the present Yushima Sage's Hall 湯島聖堂 opposite the Ochanomizu 御茶の水 station. It, or more precisely, as in the ancient period, the feast and poetry composition that followed it, became a popular event in the Edo elite feudal social world, attracting a full house of daimyo and their dependants. It reached even greater, albeit narrower, heights in the reign of the sixth shogun, Tokugawa Ienobu 徳川家宣 (r. 1709-12). Under the tutelage of Arai Hakuseki 新井白石 (1657-1725), Ienobu himself performed the libation to Confucius. However, the eighth shogun, Yoshimune 吉宗 (r. 1716-45), reacted sternly against what he perceived as the extravagance of the immediately preceding shogunal reigns and withdrew much financial support for the *sekiten*. He himself never once visited the Confucian shrine.

Sorai's views on the *sekiten*

At this point we should note that Sorai himself, as a Confucian scholar, was naturally familiar with the *sekiten* ceremony. As we have suggested, he also had a special attitude towards the worship of spirits, an aspect of the tradition to which he applied his radical utilitarianism. He believed the spirits to have been created, or at least their existence endorsed, by sages for social and political purposes. Superficially, he might have been expected to be favorably disposed to the *sekiten*, given his belief in ritual institutions and in the instrumental, utilitarian uses of spirit worship. However, Sorai absolutized the legacy of the 'former kings' who had preceded Confucius, and his thought, while always respectful of Confucius himself, did not number him among the great 'creator sages'. Sorai was certainly aware that the *sekiten* to honour Confucius in the form practised in both China and Japan was not an institution of these ancient sages and had little ancient authority. In his early thought, he seems to have approved of the ceremony in principle, though he found serious fault in its contemporary practice. In his Ken'en jippitsu 蘐園十筆 , dated by Professor Hiraishi Naoaki 平石直昭 to around 1716, he explored the principles behind veneration of Confucius in some detail. The arguments for worshipping Confucius, Sorai believed, had been 'confused'. Probably reacting against the grandiosity of Tsunayoshi's Genroku rite, Sorai particularly objected to the posthumous ennoblement of Confucius and others in the tradition. There were properly three axes of honour: age, virtue and nobility.

> Confucius is honored for his virtue. This is why he is regarded as their teacher by the emperors and kings of the ten thousand generations, so why should he borrow [a title of]

nobility? Properly he should be designated as ‘the former sage Confucius’. Thus not to confer enfeoffments and posthumous titles on him is correct.*7

Not only were Confucius’ modern titles misconceived and inflated, Sorai also attacked as ‘presumptuous’ the practice of later ages of conferring titles of nobility on other venerands in the ceremony, ‘duke’ 公 on the four correlates and ‘feudal prince’ 侯 on the ten savants . He wished also to reduce the number of additional venerands. Compared to the established Hayashi observance, this represented a shift away from the liturgical prominence given to the Mencian and Neo-Confucian traditions, for the ‘Six Gentlemen of Song’ are not identified separately as *jûshi*. Though Sorai’s list was up to date in Chinese terms, the general emphasis was closer to ancient, pre-Song, Tang versions of the ceremony, before the development of Neo-Confucianism and the rediscovery and privileging of Mencius as a key figure in the development and transmission of the Confucian Way.

However, by the time of his full intellectual maturity, Sorai seems to have grown more critical of the contemporary tradition of Confucius worship. Just as he cut down the figure of Confucius himself to that of a fallible, time-bound human being, so he seemed in his Benmei 辨名 of ca. 1720 to stop short of specifically endorsing Confucius himself as an appropriate object of sacrifice. He wrote of the *sekiten* as applying to the ‘seven creator sages’, ‘Yao 堯 Shun 舜 , Yu 禹 , Tang 湯 , Wen 文 , Wu 武 and the duke of Zhou 周公 ’. ‘The rites music, administration and teachings that they created are what the superior man learns. Therefore, he sacrifices to them in schools’; and he quoted a text from the ancient Chinese *Book of Rites* (*Raiki* 禮記) enjoining offerings to ‘earlier sages and earlier teachers’ at the opening of a school.*8 Moreover, Sorai was critical of the recent and contemporary Rinke 林家 regimen at Shôheizaka. He noted the enthusiasm of the fifth shogun for learning, but linked it to the fashion for ‘lectures’ which he described as ‘profitless’. He related ‘lectures’ to the contemporary Bakufu Confucians, whom he condemned. ‘Most of them are of no use to the shogun’*9. And he seems also to have associated ‘lectures’ historically to the *sekiten* itself.*10 Thus the most powerful Confucian mind of the period criticized the current practice of the rite and sought to modify it both in accordance with his own radical assumptions on the nature of Confucianism and possibly also to accommodate the retrenchment policies of the eighth shogun.

Let us now summarize the themes of this talk so far: we have discussed Ogyû Sorai, his Confucianism and view of spirit worship; and we glanced at the worship of Confucius as an important element of Confucianism and at Sorai’s criticism of its contemporary practice. We can say that for Sorai, the privileging of the Neo-Confucian element within the Confucian tradition was wrong; for that legitimated a subversive individual subjectivity at the expense of institutions.. Let us now move forward nearly a hundred years and turn to the Kansei reform itself and its treatment of the *sekiten* ritual. We shall approach it through the thinking of its main promoter and driver, Matsudaira Sadanobu.

The Kansei reform and Matsudaira Sadanobu

The Kansei reform began with the appointment of Matsudaira Sadanobu to the Senior Council (*rôjû* 老中) in the 6th month of 1787. It lasted effectively until the beginning of the nineteenth century. Though Sadanobu himself resigned early, he, together with his close associates, is generally recognized as the driving force behind the whole reform. A symbolic terminal date is

the performance of the autumn *sekiten* ritual in the rebuilt Shôheizaka Sage's Hall (*Seibyô* 聖廟) in 1800. The reform had many aspects, including financial retrenchment and recovery of the Bakufu finances. But from the perspective of today's talk the most important element was initially and immediately a movement to encourage, revitalize and discipline the samurai spirit of martial arts and academic learning, particularly among Bakufu feudal retainers. From the start, Sadanobu's campaign had a highly disciplinarian tone. To borrow the words of Ishakawa Ken 石川謙 : 'It might be more appropriate to call it coercion rather than encouragement'.*[11] Morohashi Tetsuji 諸橋轍次 and R.P. Dore see the reform as a search for intellectual unity or conformity within the samurai community, a desideratum, it may be mentioned, of Sorai himself. The chief vehicle for achieving moral regeneration among the samurai retainers of the Bakufu was Confucianism. Here, among competing schools, including Sorai's, the reformers decided decisively in favor of Song Neo-Confucianism. The Confucianism of the Kansei reform was from 1790, through the 'Prohibition on heterodoxy', officially exclusively, Zhu Xi Neo-Confucianism. More particularly, most of the senior Confucianists in the Bakufu College belonged to the Kimon 崎門 school of Yamazaki Ansai, 山崎闇斎 (1618-82) or were in some way associated with it. But Matsudaira Sadanobu himself also lectured to his vassals on Confucian ethics. His homilies drew on Neo-Confucian metaphysics, but are marked by an authoritarian tone. It is clear that his authoritarianism took the form of a desire to dominate and control men's minds, to direct them to right moral conduct..

As the driving figure behind the reform, Sadanobu left the imprint of his character on the Kansei *sekiten*, as had Tsunayoshi in a quite different direction on the Genroku ceremony. He does not appear directly to have left any sustained discussion of the question of *sekiten* observance in Japan in his copious writings. However, like his seventeenth century distant kinsman Tokugawa Mitsukuni 徳川光圀 (1628-1700), he revealed articulate assumptions from a ruler's perspective about Confucianism and Confucian practice in Japan that bear on the problem. Let us now glance at the thinking of this remarkable and powerful young man, only 28 when appointed to the Bakufu Senior Council (*rôjû* 老中).

Sadanobu is well known for his apparent inconsistencies. In his thought there are to be found expressed, in all their contradictariness, most of the intellectual currents of his day, so that it reads like a paradigm of the intellectual world of late eighteenth-century Japan. These attitudes co-existed in his mind with little obvious consciousness of any inherent conflict, a position that might have strained a more synthetic or systematic mind. A recent Japanese study notes that the 'greatest characteristic' of Sadanobu's 'manner of thought' was that 'he distinguished strictly between his views as an individual and his political standpoint as a chief minister'.*[12] . Sadanobu was ready, in the interest of moral revival, to impose restrictions on the intellectual life of the samurai community that he did not apply to himself or his close associates. Already, we may note, this feature of his thinking is redolent of the instrumentality identified in the political thought of Sorai himself.

As even such a short sketch suggests, Sadanobu's own mind was eclectic. Let us summarize some of his attitudes, particularly as they bore, directly or indirectly, on the question of observance of the *sekiten*. It will be seen that these attitudes were contradictory, in effect both positive and negative as far as the *sekiten* was concerned. On the positive side, first:

1. Sadanobu described himself as a student of the Hayashi. He was conscious of the long

association of the Rinke academy with the Tokugawa ruling house. As an intense Bakufu loyalist, he would not have wished to see the *sekiten*, a conspicuous element of that tradition, fall into desuetude.

2. Sadanobu shared in the gathering interest of his contemporaries in the Japanese past. This had many facets, including the religious revival of forms of Shinto worship. He himself was something of an antiquarian, concerned with preserving and understanding the record of the Japanese past. It is possible that this attitude predisposed him favorably to some forms of revivalism such as restoring the ancient *Engishiki* 延喜式 version of the *sekiten*. In that respect, there may have been a synergy between Sadanobu's antiquarianism and with that reading of Sorai's philosophy that saw him as advocating the restoration of an ancient order.

But rather more ambivalently:

3. He was, as his sermons to his samurai show, drawn to the moral intensity of the Kimon 崎門 school of Yamazaki Ansai. In fact, this may have influenced his thinking about the ceremony in two different ways and in two different directions. First, the ceremony would sacralize and legitimate the moral revival that was a major element in the Kansei Reform itself. Sadanobu himself lectured on Confucian morality. As claimed earlier, however, the tone of his lectures was disciplinary and prescriptive. He showed little sympathy for the devotional and soteriological objectives, the spiritual rewards, of Song Neo-Confucianism' behaviour rather than their souls. The ethical element of Neo-Confucianism, particularly perhaps its emphasis on self-denying loyalty, met this need admirably. Put tritely, he was more concerned with their behaviour than their souls. However, in a different direction, Kimon tradition was also suspicious of the worship of Confucius as a foreigner, and Asami Keisai 浅見絅斎 (1652-1711) among Ansai's disciples wrote an essay condemning unofficial worship of Confucius in Japan, 'Hi sekiten saku' 批釋奠策 .*[13] To the extent that Sadanobu was influenced by Kimon teaching, this may have inhibited his enthusiasm for the ceremony.

And working negatively to deter Sadanobu from promoting the ceremony:

4. He was widely read in Chinese history and illustrated much of his writing with Chinese, rather than Japanese, examples, but Sadanobu was also something of a Sinophobe. He feared what he saw as the debilitating and softening influence of China on the martial spirit of samurai. Too enthusiastic a worship of Confucius and the civil values that he symbolized might be harmful.

5. In the same direction, but on the religious side, Sadanobu seems to have had serious doubts on the efficacy or even the propriety of worshipping Confucius in Japan. These doubts resulted in what may have been among the most egregious of his inconsistencies. Even as he promoted the liturgical reform of the *sekiten* in Edo, he altogether banished the worship of Confucius in the domain school of his own fief school in Shirakawa. Confucius himself was not represented on the altar of this school, the Rikkyôkan 立教館 ; rather the Sun Goddess was the central object of veneration. It will be necessary to refer to this most startling instance of his inconsistency again in the conclusion of this talk.*[14]

6. In his own domain, Sadanobu preferred to emphasize indigenous tradition. He instituted a ritual called 'The festival of military preparedness' (*Bubisai* 武備祭) from 1784. This seems to have been designed as a military counterpart to and perhaps even substitute for the civil *sekiten*. It was, like the *sekiten*, held in the second and eighth months, but on the memorial day to the domain founder, Matsudaira Sadatsuna. Thus one is tempted to say that in place of Confucian universalism and civil values, Sadanobu stressed domain particularism and military values.

7. Sadanobu was deeply influenced by the political example of his grandfather, the eighth shogun, Tokugawa Yoshimune and by Yoshimune's Kyôhô 享保 reform. But Yoshimune himself, as already remarked, had been indifferent to the ceremony; indeed he had withdrawn some of the funding located by Tsunayoshi. He had not once attended the ceremony or visited the Hayashi Confucian shrine.

8. Together with these competing ideas and attitudes in Sadanobu's mind, the most profound influence on his 'public' thinking has been recognized as the political thought of Ogyû Sorai. A recent study summarizes his thought as having 'a strong Setchû-ha 折衷派 coloring on a basis of Sorai-gaku'.*[15] By his own confession, Sorai's *Taiheisaku* 太平策 was favorite reading. This text may have bolstered his strong sense of mission as a reformer intervening in a period of cyclical extravagance and dynastic decline, together with a sense of this intervention as properly based on political 'techniques'. Basic to Sadanobu's thinking, as to Sorai's, was a utilitarian approach to learning. Learning, the study of Confucianism and other forms of knowledge ,was valuable instrumentally for promoting political objectives. Indeed, Sadanobu's apparent contradictions and inconsistencies can, albeit facilely, be reconciled by the one criterion of utility. Practices, morality and institutions were to be employed not for what might be thought of as their epistemological truth or mutual consistency, but for their practical value in promoting an ordered and safe realm of Japan. Even Sadanobu's ethical intensity can be so subsumed. As the American scholar Herman Ooms puts it: 'This view of ethics as a manipulative device . . . was a transposition of Sorai's view of the political structure as a means to maintain social order'.*[16] Just so, as already remarked, Sadanobu seems little interested in the Neo-Confucian analalogue to Buddhsit enlightenment. Like Sorai, Sadanobu believed in the efficacy of institutional controls; law, and the fear that it should arouse among 'the lower people', was a necessary element in political control. Complementary to this form of control was the need for unity, a theme of Sorai's thought and generally identified as a motivation in the reform and, of course, in the 'Prohibition'. Concomitant also was a conviction that control over intellectual life must remain with the political elite. This found expression in a belief in the necessity of a Sorai-type authoritarian suppression of individual intellectual autonomy among all except the governing elite.

How did these complex and contradictory attitudes influence Sadanobu's approach to the question of the ritual worship of Confucius? Sadanobu's response to the problem presented by the reform must be inferred from the reform itself. It is perhaps necessary to note that though Sadanobu had left office by this time, the reform of the cult of Confucius was supervised by his close allies Matsudaira Nobuakira 松平信明 (1763-1817) and Hotta Masaatsu 堀田正敦 (1758-1832).

The liturgical reform was cautious and ambivalent, at once conservative in its attempt to secure ongoing performance of the rite and restrictive in its apparent attempt to limits its appeal and influence. Indeed, in its disregard of consistency and its political design, it is tempted to call it a form of domestic *realpolitik*. It is not difficult to see why. To sum up the previous discussion: preservation of the *status quo* with respect to the ceremony itself was a necessary acknowledgement of the tradition that Sadanobu, himself intensely loyal to the Bakufu and to Tokugawa tradition, valued, sought to strengthen and used to legitimate his reform. Liturgical recognition of of venerands symbolic of the moral revival that was an aim of the reform was also surely desirable. At the same time, enhancement of the *sekiten* would counter the reformers' declared admiration for the frugal style of Yoshimune; it might also promote ideals of conduct that Sadanobu wished to counter, leading to an over-emphasis on civil rather than military values; it might legitimate the expression of subjective opinions or what he considered a debilitating Sinophilia; or a deflection from the patriotism that Sadanobu wished to foster at a time of perceived national peril. Most important from the point of view of the theme of this paper, preservation or enhancement of the Rinke status quo might sacralize a version of the tradition that Sorai himself had condemned as subversive and destructive of unity; it might, even, be ritually improper in the Japanese situation.

The sekiten in the reform

To attempt to trace how these ambivalent attitudes worked out in practice, let us now glance briefly at the progress of the reform as it affected the cult of Confucius. On appointment to the position of *rôjû* in 1787, Sadanobu might have been expected to make a symbolic gesture to the spiritual aspect of the reform that he now began. After all, it was a traditional Japanese practice at moments of radical institutional renovation to invoke supernatural powers; as it were to orient the proposed changes to the supernatural world and to seek its sanction. But perhaps because his attitude to the cult of Confucius was so conflicted, Sadanobu in fact left it to the end. The famous doctrinal 'Prohibition of heterodoxy' came early in the reform, in 1790. Over the following years, the Bakufu asserted control over the Confucian academy; the school was taken over by the Bakufu from the Hayashi family, and its students officially restricted to retainers. Where hitherto the Shôheikô had been a semi-official academy associated with the Bakufu but open to outsiders, it now became official, a school for retainers of the Tokugawa house, established in the name of the Shogun himself and funded officially. With that, importantly, came Bakufu control over appointments and procedures. Only slowly, however, did the reformers turn their attention to the cult of Confucius. In 1796, the dilapidated Confucian shrine was rebuilt, though this restoration, too, had its ambiguities. The restored building eschewed all color. The result was a structure that projected an atmosphere of austerity.

Last to be addressed was the delayed question of liturgical reform itself. Finally, in 1799, a commission, that refuge of the vacillators and the undecided, was appointed to prepare directives and diagrams for a reformed ceremony. This commission reported on 1800/i/2; the recommendations were handed to the community of 'Confucian scholars' on i/13. Most important was the commission's radical first recommendation:

> The directives for the next *Sekiten* will wholly follow the *Kaiyuan li* and the *Engishiki*, with allowances made for what is difficult in them in the present.[*17]

This was indeed a dramatic recommendation. Essentially, if implemented literally, it meant rejecting more than a century and a half of Hayashi and Tokugawa tradition and reverting decisively to the ancient liturgy of the Heian period. Concomitantly, it would also ignore post-Tang developments in the Confucian tradition. Most saliently, it would eliminate the liturgical inclusion of figures in the Song Neo-Confucian movement, the tradition embraced by the Hayashi, and, of course, adopted as the exclusive orthodoxy underpinning the reform. It would also eliminate Mencius and Zi Si. Such a revival, however, was evidently felt to be too radical to be consistently applied. After a transitional performance in the spring of 1800, the solution adopted for the first, fully reformed, *sekiten* of that autumn was in effect a compromise: it adopted the *Engishiki* liturgical form of the ceremony, but retained the traditional Rinke 'four correlates' and the six Song Neo-Confucians as venerands. However, the compromise only went so far. After some vacillation in the spring, the important invocation, in liturgical terms a high point in the ceremony, adopted the wording of the *Engishiki*, which did not mention Mencius, Zi Si or the Song Neo-Confucians at all. It mentioned by name only Confucius and Yan Hui.

> Hail! On the seventh day of the eighth month of the twelfth year of Kansei, the Barbarian-quelling Generalissimo respectfully sends the Rector of the Academy Hayashi Taira 林衡 of the lower fifth rank junior and dares clearly to announce to the Former Sage, the Universal Prince of Culture: You, O Prince, were surely vouchsafed by Heaven. When you were born your knowledge was innate; you set in order the rites and music; you clearly displayed culture and teachings; your abiding merit and bequeathed influence are looked up to for a thousand years. Through this, we latter-day students may 'cleave to benevolence and disport in the arts.'*[18] Respectfully, with lengths of silk and with sacrificial victims and wine, with grain heaped in various vessels, we reverently serve you according to the ancient procedures; according to the the patterns we set forth the pure oblations, with the Former Teacher, Master Yan and others as correlates. Please partake.*[19]

In this way, the revived ceremony retained some place for the traditional Rinke Neo-Confucian scheme; the Confucians who had transmitted Song Neo-Confucianism, the exclusive orthodoxy of the reform, were represented symbolically; but their names were suppressed from the important invocation.

The unsatisfactory, inconsistent nature of this compromise did not go unchallenged. It was pointed out by one of the commissioners, a liturgical conservative, Inuzuka Inami 犬塚印南 (1750-1813), a student from the pre-reform Hayashi school. He commented at this time that it was wrong liturgically to privilege Yan zi with an invocation addressed to him alone among the four correlates and to omit the other three. Inami was in effect pointing to the difficulty of marrying an ancient liturgy (with two main venerands: Confucius and 顔回) to a modern, changed form of the tradition (with one chief venerand, four correlates and six Song dynasty 'subsidiary venerands'). His point would seem to be that the reformed liturgy did not solve this difficulty satisfactorily. It did not properly accommodate the four correlates, major figures who reflected post-Tang developments in the exegetical and liturgical tradition and of course the beliefs of the Neo-Confucian orthodoxy. Thus, paradoxically, the reformed liturgy suppressed the liturgical salience of, or at least compromised, the very Neo-Confucian tradition that the reformers imposed on the academic community as exclusively orthodox. It may well be significant that Inami, himself a

former student at the Hayashi academy, resigned his position in the Bakufu college from the autumn of this year.

The significance of the reform

Granted that it appeared inconsistent and liturgically blemished, what was the significance of this adoption of a pre-Neo-Confucian form of the ceremony? I wish to argue that its flawed nature, its inbuilt liturgical inconsistency, reflected in the liturgical mode a profoundly ambivalent approach to the cult of Confucius on the part of Sadanobu and his fellow reformers.

First, in a positive direction, for the leaders of the Kansei reform, the revival of the ancient *sekiten* must have brought certain obvious benefits. In immediate terms, however belatedly and in however flawed a manner, the revival of the ceremony formally sanctified the revival of Confucianism that had all along been an aim of the reformers. The Confucian project was now sacralized in a revived and now official ritual act within an academy funded and sponsored in the name of the shogun. The reformed liturgy could also be said to preserve, albeit in a liturgically compromised, reduced form, the symbolic and liturgical deference to the Neo-Confucian tradition that was traditional in the Rinke school and had been declared 'orthodox' in the 1790 prohibition. For the four correlates and six subsidiary venerands, representative of the line of transmission (*daotong* 道統) of Neo-Confucianism, remained, in accordance with Rinke tradition, represented in the ceremony. They received offerings, even if they were no longer named in the invocation. The formal commitment of the reform to Song Neo-Confucianism is symbolically preserved, or at least not explicitly denied. In broad terms, both Bakufu tradition and the moral basis for the Kansei Reform that particularly interested Sadanobu had been protected. But it must be noted that the devotional and soteriological aspect of Neo-Confucianism, symbolized in the Zhu Xi and indeed the traditional Rinke ceremony by the liturgical prominence of the Song Neo-Confucian venerands, has been weakened by their omission from the invocation.

In reverting to the ancient *Engishiki* version, the reformers could also be said to have accommodated the trend to Japanese cultural revivalism that was a feature of their world. But there were further ideological and political rewards. Matsudaira Sadanobu must surely have intended the ceremony to assert the legitimacy of the Bakufu as the heir to Japan's ancient state. The *Engishiki* liturgy was unambiguously that of a state ritual. In Tang China, whence it was directly adopted, it had been performed under the direction of the emperor. It was, as already pointed out, historically a rite of the 'cosmic ordering' type, associated with a monarchical regime. The shogun's role as prime agent and sponsor of the revived ceremony thus symbolically consolidated a monarchical role within the Japanese polity. Arai Hakuseki, it is tempting to suggest, would not have been displeased. The new ceremony also identified the Bakufu with the whole body of ethical thought ultimately attributable to Confucius himself. In addition to his explicit military role, like other East Asian rulers, the shogun could claim a symbolic civil and moral function. More specifically in institutional terms, in appropriating the ancient *Engishiki* and naming the shogun in the invocation as the ultimate agent of the ritual and as the sponsor of the new shrine, the revived ceremony symbolically proclaimed the new Bakufu College, site of the ceremony, as a national institution, successor to the ancient institution of the Daigakuryô 大学寮 , the national institute for the education of officials in ancient Japan. It also associated the military regime, with the shogun at its head, with one of the periods of Japanese history celebrated for 'good government'. Thus the 'cosmological ordering' version of the rite enjoyed a restoration in the service of legitimating the

Tokugawa Bakufu at a time of perceived national difficulty.

At the same time, however, now in a negative direction, revival of the *Engishiki* version of the ceremony acted in a subtle way to isolate the ceremony under strict Bakufu control. To understand how this restriction and isolation were effected, it is necessary to be reminded of the historical nuances of the version of the *sekiten* now revived. The *Engishiki sekiten* consisted of two discrete parts: a 'pre-dawn celebration' (*mimeisai* 未明祭) a religious ceremony and a sequel under the heading of 'exposition and discussion' (*kôron* 講論). The 'pre-dawn celebration' constituted the central religious part of the ceremony; it was held in the shrine itself (*byô* 廟) and consisted of offerings, libations and invocations addressed to Confucius and Yan Hui. However, this was an intra-mural ceremony, with attendance and participation historically restricted to the professional staff of the academy, not high ranking within the ancient court hierarchy, and by students, rather than the high nobility.

This religious ceremony had been followed by an elaborate and more socially inclusive sequence, a lecture, feasting and reading of poetry and other functions, held in the lecture hall of the *Daigakuryô*. In contrast to the *mimeisai*, this second part of the ceremony was attended by the high court nobility, and provision was even made for the attendance of the crown prince. Thus the *Engishiki sekiten* had involved a wide spectrum of the polity. But it did so in a bifurcated manner; the religious ceremony itself, arguably by far the more important component for the Confucian cult, involved only the academic institutions and their staff and official students. It reflected a stage in the evolution of the ancient Japanese *sekiten* at which the religious core of the rite had become largely divorced from the concerns and participation of the imperial family or the higher oligarchic bureaucracy.

Of the *Engishiki* liturgy, however, the Kansei reform revived only the intra-mural 'predawn celebration'. It wholly abandoned verse composition and feasting that had been so popular during the patronage of the fifth shogun. In some sense, it was a reduced, even 'minimalist' celebration. To borrow the words of Inuzuka Inami, the writer of the *Shôhei shi* 昌平志, 'Whatever was concerned with empty ornament was abandoned'.[*20] The historical resonance of this was profound indeed. In stripping the ceremony of its cultural and esthetic allurements, the Kansei *sekiten* had followed the model of Yoshimune's retrenchment. But it had also reverted to its historical *Engishiki* roots in more, simply, than its outward liturgical form. It revived also the socially and politically sequestered aspect of the ancient religious ceremony proper. Like the ancient *mimeisai*, the Kansei revival directly involved only relatively low-ranking Confucian specialists and a student body drawn from the *hatamoto* 旗本 and *gokenin* 御家人 among the Bakufu vassal corps.[*21] Just as in ancient Japan, the career prospects of students in the university had been little changed by their studies, so also the sons of *hatamoto* and *gokenin* stood to gain little, except modest prizes, themselves differentiated by inherited rank, from their Neo-Confucian studies at the Bakufu College.

Thus the ceremony did not sacralize Confucian values in the whole Tokugawa bureaucratic community; it did not transform the values informing or articulating the structure of the Tokugawa state as a whole; it did not seriously challenge the deep-rooted ascription of samurai society. The point can be more broadly summarized as follows: despite certain gestures towards the Chinese structure of a meritocratic bureaucracy such as the introduction of an examination system, the Kansei educational reform, symbolized by the reformed liturgy of the *sekiten*, challenged the existing system at best superficially. Like the society of the time of the *Engishiki*, Tokugawa

samurai society remained largely hereditarily and ascriptively determined. As in ancient Japan, though now under the control of a far more authoritarian system of government, education did not provide a path to the highest office. In that sense, the ceremony and the symbolic figure of Confucius is unlikely to have engaged the aspirations of the students within the academic community; or if it did so, it was as a remote and unattainable ideal.

The question of Sorai's influence

Revival of the ancient *Engishiki* ceremony was restrictive in another subtle and important way that may reflect the influence of Ogyû Sorai. The *Engishiki* liturgy reflects an early, pre-Neo-Confucian form of the Confucian tradition. It belonged to the 'cosmological ordering' phase of ritual development as already discussed. We have noted the subtle liturgical disprivileging of Mencius, Zi Si and the representatives of the Song Neo-Confucian revival in the Kansei revived version. These figures, however, represent the tradition within Confucianism that most privileges individual subjectivity, that aspect of contemporary Confucian practice that had most aroused the polemical reflexes of Ogyû Sorai. It is not fanciful to see their liturgical demotion as an accommodation of the influence from Sorai. Influence in intellectual history is, of course, often difficult to demonstrate. In the present case, evidence is in the main indirect. It is general and diffuse, to do with the intellectual climate of the time and influences on the thinking of the main actors in the reform; but it is also focussed on the detail of the liturgy itself.

First, there can be little doubt that Sorai's thought influenced the general intellectual climate of the Reform and with that, the choices of its implementers, chiefly of Sadanobu. In view of the fact that the Kansei 'Prohibition' is often said to be aimed against Sorai's school, it is useful to be reminded that the influence of Sorai was twofold: towards the 'private domain' of 'poetry literature and history' in one direction and, in the other, 'maintaining order in the state and peace in the world'.*[22] The declared target of the reformers was the frivolity that they associated with the former. Sorai's influence with regard to the conduct of administration, however, was more subtle and profound. It surely determined little less than the overall weltschaung in which the liturgical reform was embedded. Historians indeed seem to agree that Sorai's early eighteenth-century assault on Zhu Xi metaphysics changed the intellectual climate for the remainder of the Tokugawa period, to the disadvantage of the traditional Zhu Xi school. Sagara Tôru, for instance, sees the reform as an unsuccessful attempt to recover power by Zhu Xi Neo-Confucianists discredited and disprized of influence by the spread of Sorai learning. For Sagara, Zhu Xi Confucianism had lost its authority and no longer had the strength to lead the world of thought. Of the Kansei prohibition itself, he writes, 'we can see the reality of the decline of the Confucian movement'. The prohibition on heterodoxy, was a play for power: an 'attempt to recover its social power by the followers of Zhu Xi Confucianism'. It was not a grass-roots movement, but 'depended on admonition, surveillance, and discipline.'*[23]

Sagara's view of the reform as authoritarian and by resurgent Zhu Xi scholars, when set beside the analysis of Sadanobu's thinking as profoundly influenced by Sorai, suggests the paradox with which this lecture started out. It is Maruyama Masao who directly and with greatest insight confronts the paradox of thinkers influenced by Sorai espousing the Zhu Xi metaphorical theories that Sorai himself condemned. 'Sorai's enormous intellectual influence', he writes, was more often demonstrated in the thought of his opponents than in that of his followers.'*[24] For Maruyama, this influence found expression in the discrediting of the Zhu Xi belief in the 'natural'

character of Confucian morality. In his view, the prohibition on heterodoxy was reactionary, 'in effect an attempt at a compulsory revival of the ideology of natural order. It was an attempt to impose feudal standards as a natural law by force, when they had already lost such self-evident validity'.*25

Exactly so. It is possible to apply Maruyama's insight to the reform of the liturgy of the ceremony and to see in the manner of implementation of the reform and the prohibition an expression of precisely the utilitarian view of political authority, the *realpolitik*, that is characteristic of Sorai's thought in practice. In this view, inconsistencies such as were displayed by Sadanobu did not, in themselves, matter in principle. It did not matter that the Song metaphysical creed had suffered discredit in the eyes of many or most. As long as beliefs and practices were perceived to be instrumentally conducive to the end of contentment or good governance and stability, they were acceptable; their mutual consistency was not an issue. So the general climate of intellectual life in the Kansei period was probably receptive to instrumental and authoritarian interventions. Sorai of course advocated 'unity', suppression of individual subjective opinions. Sadanobu's bold appropriation of the *sekiten* in the name of the shogun can be understood as, in part at least, a pre-emptive move to monopolize control over the Confucian tradition at the sacral level, just as the 'prohibition' aimed to control Confucian knowledge at the level of ideology. Sadanobu's simultaneous revival and paring down of the ceremony, his seeming desire to preserve it but at the same time to make in unattractive and austere, again are best interpreted as politically motivated attempt to honor Tokugawa tradition but at the same time to restrict and control the influence of certain aspects of Confucianism.

Circumstantial evidence

But it is possible to go further in the same direction, and to see several features of the liturgical reform in terms of Sorai's influence. Sorai seems to have been associated in the minds of contemporaries with restorationism, or 'return to the past'. The *Engishiki* liturgy, as we have emphasized, reflects an early, pre-Neo-Confucian form of the Confucian tradition. Moreover, put in terms of Catherine Bell's typology of ritual, the *Engishiki* represented a ritual of the 'cosmic ordering' type. In its original form, its scope was the cosmos and the polity and its ruler; it did not symbolically address the 'ethico-moral' conduct of the individual follower of the way. Such a ritual resonated well with Sorai's own beliefs. Recall that Sorai himself did not believe that moral self regeneration was a concern of the individual in the Confucian tradition as properly understood. The original *Engishiki* version, rather than the 'ethical-moral' Zhu Xi version however much adapted, would have appealed to Sorai on these grounds.

Sorai's views on the liturgy of the ceremony itself may also have influenced the reformers. That Sorai's criticism of the 'presumption' of later *sekiten* practice was understood and influential is attested late in the period by Nakatani Unkan 中谷雲漢 (1812-75), a scholar of the Sorai school. Unkan, writing of the *sekiten* in connection with the ceremony proposed for the Amagasaki 尼崎 domain, endorsed Sorai's criticism of the 'presumptuous arbitrariness and nonsense' of the Tang, Song and later practice of awarding and taking away 'titles of nobility, posthumous titles, and rankings' to 'several tens' below Confucius and Yan Hui in the context of the *sekiten*.*26 Thus it is indeed not fanciful to suggest that Sadanobu, in turning to *Engishiki* with its shorter list of venerands,*27 believed that he was following a Sorai preference. In so doing, he may have believed that he was also doing something to suppress the potentially subversive

'subjectivity' that was anathema both to Sorai and to Sadanobu himself.

There is further interesting, albeit again circumstantial and analogical, evidence that Sorai's views on the liturgy of the *sekiten* may have influenced the decision to revive the ancient liturgy during this period. This evidence comes from the feudal provinces, beyond the Bakufu College. It seems that, in domain schools, a Sorai school affiliation may have deterred Confucians from *sekiten* liturgies that venerated Mencius, Zi Si and the Song subsidiary venerands. At Hirosaki 弘前 , under Tsugaru Nobuharu 津軽信明 (1762-91), the eighth daimyo, a strong admirer of Sorai, the Tang version of the ceremony was used and only Confucius and Yan Hui mentioned in the invocation. In Hiroshima, the Kimon scholar Rai Shunsui 頼春水 (1748-1816) defeated the Sorai scholar Kagawa Nanpin 香川南浜 (1734-92) in a factional dispute, to establish Zhu Xi learning as the domain's orthodoxy. The defeated Nanpin died in 1792, but Sorai learning was perpetuated in the private setting of his Shûgyôdô 修業堂 by scholars of his persuasion. In what must surely have been a deliberate gesture, they venerated only 'the former sage and former teacher' [sc. Confucius and Yan Hui]. Similar linkage of Sorai affiliation with exclusion of the four correlates and Song venerands is to be seen in the domain schools in the Shônai 庄内 , Tawara 田原 and Izushi 出石 domains. Conversely, aggressively Kimon or Zhu Xi schools tended, unsurprisingly, to include representatives of the Song school among their venerands. To mention just a handful only, the domains schools in Shibata 新発田 , Tsuwano 津和野 , Kagoshima 鹿児島 (where the Sorai school was dismissed in favour of Zhu Xi as a result of a factional dispute) all listed Song scholars among their venerands; all were Ansai affiliated or had relations with the publicly Zhu Xi Bakufu College.

In the light of this evidence, it is again not fanciful to suggest that the Kansei reform of the *sekiten* owes its peculiar, and it has to be said, blemished and paradoxical form to the influence of Sorai. This influence was thus both of a general and diffuse type: the background acidic eating away of the persuasiveness of the Zhi Xi understanding of the world and its substitution by a utilitarian approach toward governance and, with that also, to an instrumental view of the world of religious practice. This allowed the manipulative adoption of a cultic practice not so much for reasons of belief, but for the instrumental and disciplinary ends. But secondly, Sorai's influence seems likely to have extended to the level of liturgical choice and detail, to the adoption of an ancient, and in terms of the contemporary Confucian tradition, anachronistic, liturgy. That liturgy disprivileged elements of the tradition that the reformers, even as they proclaimed them orthodox, also sensed to be potentially subversive and wished to keep under control.

Conclusion: anthropological perspectives

How successful was the reform of the ceremony? After the reform, the religious cult of Confucius seems to have continued to play a regular part in the life of the post-reform academic community of the Bakufu College. There is no reason to doubt that certain among the Bakufu College community, its professional Confucianists and liturgists, were committed and sincere. None the less, the ceremony features little in the extant documentation of the College. Like the ancient 'Pre-dawn celebration' *mimeisai*, it seems to have become taken for granted and recedes from the foreground of College matters. There is no evidence that it flourished. A directive of 1807 addressed a problem of talking during rehearsals. The official record of observance also suggests flagging interest and depleted liturgical energy. The main source is *Zoku Tokugawa jikki* 続徳川実記 . According to the research of Sudô Toshio 須藤敏夫 , during the 67 years up till the Restoration there were 87 observances and 48 suspensions ; of these, a 'considerable number' are for 'no

identifiable reason'.*[28] The ceremony is said to have become gradually formalized and perfunctory. Certainly, the lack of evidence concerning the ceremony in this final phase suggests a fading of perceived importance. Nor is this decline surprising.

Certainly, reasons external to the ceremony itself played a part in the decline of the *sekiten*. The Bakumatsu national crisis, summarized in the locution *naiyû gaikan* 内憂外患 , may, of course, have made traditional Neo-Confucian approaches to social and political problems seem bookish. The full history for the worship of Confucius in the Bakumatsu period has yet to be written. But it would seem likely that academic Confucianism, especially perhaps of the Zhu Xi variety, failed to engage the commitment of intellectuals and the younger, more dynamic samurai. Attention shifted to more compelling questions of national crisis and survival and to orientation to a new and dangerous world..

But there were also causes intrinsic to the ceremony itself that are worth exploring. Here, anthropological views of ritual may be illuminating, though caution is required when applying such theory cross-culturally to Japan. According to the theory of Victor Turner, one of the functions of ritual is to create a sense of 'communitas', symbolically to resolve tensions within the community. At the same time, these tensions also provide the dynamism that drives the performance and inspires its participants. It was that tension that informed the great *sekiten* for the crown prince in the Chinese *DaTang Kaiyuan li* version of the rite, in which autocratic imperial power was symbolically and ritually reconciled with bureaucratic rationalism. There, 'both imperial and academic participants in the rite unite in an act of homage to the founder of the tradition of learning on which the bureaucracy itself depends for its training, identification of merit, selection and the very moral and political ideals that, in the ideal order of things, inform the whole polity.'*[29]

But if this 'resolution of conflict' theory of the function of ritual has any truth, the Kansei version of the rite no longer effectively performed the function of creating communitas from tensely related elements participating in the ritual. Despite its formal links to the Bakufu, the Kansei *sekiten* was an intramural and inward-looking rite. Despite its acknowledgment of the patronage of the shogunate, it kept political power at arm's length. Its chief officers were professional Confucianists, rather than, as in imperial China, active participants in the wider bureaucracy. The liturgy addressed no serious conflict of interest within the polity; the lives of the participant were already largely ascriptively determined before entering the academy and participating in its ritual. That ceremony derived no dynamism from its institutional setting, since the Bakufu college delivered no substantial rewards in terms of career rewards for its students. The Confucius whom it venerated was not a powerful cultural force in the larger community. For these reasons internal to its structure, and social and political setting, it is not surprising that the Kansei *sekiten* ran out of energy and conviction.

Application of general models of ritual suggests other features of the Kansei *sekiten* that may have further compromised its efficacy and energy. As the historians Ishikawa Ken, Sagara Tôru and others noted, the Kansei reform was coercive in spirit. In the expansive claim of Maruyama Masao already quoted, the Kansei reform was 'an attempt to impose feudal standards as a natural law by force when they had already lost such self-evident validity'. It aroused widespread resentment. Like the prohibition on heterodoxy, the Kansei *sekiten* was imposed. It is unlikely to have been rooted in or reflected the aspirations of the whole society or of many beyond a small, if in themselves interesting, coterie of professional Confucian scholars and liturgists. In

contrast to China, there was no large constituency of men motivated by aspiration to high office or to whom the liturgical recognition of Confucius and his followers was in any way compelling. In the Japanese society, this now austere ceremony, shorn of its erstwhile cultural glamour, may well have seemed tainted by the coercive aspect of the reform as a whole.

But coercion is seen as inimical to successful ritual. It is here that Sorai's authoritarian utilitarianism becomes relevant, but may also subvert what it seeks to promote. For, particularly from Sadanobu's point of view, the reformed *sekiten* was a Sorai-type device. It needed power or some form of coercion to be sustained. To quote the anthropologist Roy Rappaport, '[S]anctity, itself the foundation of the true and the correct, and the numinous supporting it, become false when they are subordinated to the powerful, for they falsify consciousness. But the cost is great even for those who are not deluded. For them, ritual becomes empty and meaningless.'[*30]

Furthermore, the revivalist nature of the reformed ceremony may have created unease for some. In opting for an unadapted archaic and anachronistic version of the liturgy, the reformers gained some obvious ideological benefits, as discussed above. But they were in effect embracing a form of liturgical fundamentalism, 'the literal interpretation of highly specific texts and the granting to them of absolute authority'.[*31] The choice, it was suggested, was partly inspired by Sorai-type restorationism, by a desire to filtre out, or to de-emphasize, problematic aspects of the ceremony, combined with a fashionable nativist nostalgia for the Japanese past. Such fundamentalism, however, can create problems of disjunction with the present. It 'sometimes exposes the sacred, itself the ground of conventional truth, to general invalidation, falsification, or at least high dubiety.'[*32] The revival of an ancient 'cosmic ordering' type of rite carried the danger of remoteness. Quite literally, the revived *Engishiki* backstaged those interpreters of the tradition, Mencius and others who had rendered it personally meaningful and empowered individual followers to act as independent moral agents within their own society. In this, the reformed Kansei *sekiten*, reflects Sadanobu's own authoritarian interest in controlling men's minds, in disciplinary Neo-Confucian ethics, rather than Neo-Confucian spirituality.

Considerations of power and instrumentality refer back once again and finally to the question of the place of belief. First, there is the question of general acceptance of the Confucian, or Neo-Confucian, world view in the samurai society of the time. As a ritual, the *sekiten* projected a world view. To borrow the language of Roy Rappaport again, it articulated and acted out a *logos*, a world view that was a 'true, moral, eternal, harmonious, encompassing unitary order'.[*33] Here, participation in the 'liturgical order' may constitute 'a public acceptance of a public order'.[*34] But belief, rather than mere acceptance, is also necessary for the long term health of a ritual. '[A] liturgical order that is not supported by the *conviction* of at least some of the members of the congregations realizing it is in danger of gradually falling into desuetude'.[*35] Even within a religious tradition as pluralistic as that of East Asia, here may have been problems for samurai in committing themselves to belief in a Confucian vision of the world.

Sadanobu's blatant inconsistency, his manifestly instrumental view of ritual, a legacy of Sorai, and his refusal to enact the *sekiten* in his own school, precisely the ground on which the Confucian tradition sanctioned such performance, must surely have further weakened the cogency of the ceremony in the minds of contemporaries. It laid the ceremony open to the suspicion that it was merely an expedient exploitation of religious belief (or in Sadanobu's case perhaps even disbelief) for a perceived social need, or, in extreme terms, a 'lie'. It could be discarded or adopted at will. No doubt Sadanobu would have protested that different social groups, Bakufu

retainers, potential holders of government bureaucratic office on the one hand and domain samurai on the other, fulfilled different functions and that it was therefore appropriate that they should worship at different altars. However, where religions with a claim to universality are concerned, such recourse to what amounts to a kind of 'situational ethics' runs the risk of subverting religious authority. Put differently, Sadanobu's own Rikkyôkan altar arrangement, banishing any representation of the person of Confucius, placed the native cult above the cult of Confucius, and so displaced it as the ultimate locus of sanctity. Though the Bakufu College was a different constituency, this could only weaken the authority of the cult in Edo. Here, it is tempting to claim, Sorai's utilitarianism and instrumental approach to ritual became ultimately self-defeating. Roy Rappaport warns that '[a] liturgical order that is not supported by the conviction of at least some of those realizing it at least some of the time has become, as we say, "mere ritual", and is likely soon to pass away. Its gods, banished from eternity, disappear into the past'.*[36] This, of course, was not yet the situation for Confucianism at the time of the Kansei reform. But there were many straws in the wind. Its leading promoter held inconsistent views about its propriety; the ceremony was shorn of its social and cultural attractions; participation was limited to a relatively small sub-community; its symbols were remote from the lives and expectations of ordinary Bakufu vassals; and its liturgy was unsettlingly blemished by significant inconsistency. It is little wonder that the ceremony faltered.

Let us finish with a valedictory account of the Bakufu College *sekiten* of autumn, 1866, described as the final Hayashi observance of the ceremony in the Tokugawa period.*[37] The observer was Takahashi Katsuhiro 高橋勝弘, in his youth a student in the broader community of the College, whose own private pupil status had excluded him from participation, and who had had to obtain special permission to attend.

> What seemed so very strange was the attire of the Hayashi and the other students. The Hayashi wore strangely colored Chinese clothes, with something like short pantaloons (*kohakama* 小袴; they carried maces (*shaku* 笏) and wore black wooden shoes; the 20 or 30 teachers and students all had blue long-sleeved robes referred to as *hoi* 布衣; and they had little hats on their heads. For the offerings, they used the so-called *ho* 簠, *ki* 簋, *hen* 籩 and *tô* 豆 [ritual vessels]. They were all raising these a little below eye level, and the Rector of the University raised his mace and led the way in ascending and descending [the steps]. I suppose that was to lead the students in the performance of the rite. The slowness of his gait, evocative of an age of peace, was calm; it was slower than the walking of an ox. Raise one step; lower one step; there was time enough between. The 'bowing, yielding precedence and moving from one position to another'*[38] (*yûjô shûsen* 揖讓周旋) were very respectful. I do not know how many times the Rector of the College ascended and descended to the Hall of Great Accomplishment. It must be what they call the ritual of nine offerings (*kyûken* 九献).
>
> This ritual has existed in our country from the height of the imperial court on down and has been performed in the Ashikaga school. It is a ceremony eleven hundred years old, but this time was the final performance. While I was observing it, I was in a trance and felt as though I was in my very self travelling in Queli 闕里 [Confucius' birthplace] and attending on the Former Sage, Former Teacher and 72 disciples. Overcome with a reverent wonder, I lingered, unable to tear myself away.*[39]

The tone is valedictory. In Takahashi's eyes the ritual is exotic and alien. It has become a nostalgic spectacle, with little practical relevance to the present. As was to happen shortly to the image of Confucius himself, it was essentially a museum piece. It had become a 'mere ritual'.

Endnotes

＊1 What follows is the revised text of a lecture given by invitation at Kokushikan University on Saturday, 7th November, 2009. In the main, references are supplied only for direct quotations from other sources. A few other points are annotated.

＊2 The Kansei Reform is conventionally dated to the years 1787-93; here, the date is extended to include the liturgical reform of the sekiten, dated to 1800.

＊3 For this typology, see Catherine Bell. *Ritual: perspectives and dimensions*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997; reprinted with a 'Foreword' in 2009, pp. 185-91.

＊4 Bell, p. 188.

＊5 The status of *hankô* could be perceived as 'private' as late as the *Bakumatsu* period. See Monbushô 文部省 , comp. *Nihon kyôikushi shiryô* 日本教育史資料 . 9 vols. Tokyo: Fuzanbô, 1890-92; hereafter NKSS) , vol. 1, p. 345. Cf also below, note 14.

＊6 Inuzuka Inami (Taiô) 犬塚印南 (退翁) . *Shôhei shi* 昌平志 . In *Nihon kyôiku bunko* 日本教育文庫 , *Gakujutsuhen* 学術篇 . Tokyo: Dôbunkan, 1910, p. 170.

＊7 *Ken'en jippitsu* (蒹園十筆) . In Imanaka Kanji 今中寛司 and Naramoto Tatsuya 奈良辰也 , comp. *Ogyû Sorai zenshû* 荻生徂徠全集 , vol. 1: Tokyo: Kawade Shobô Shinsha, 1973, pp. 495; 216.

＊8 *Benmei* 辨名 . In Yoshikawa Kôjirô 吉川幸次郎 et al. eds. *Ogyû Sorai* 荻生徂徠 . In 日本思想大系 vol. 36, Tokyo Iwanami Shoten, 1973, pp. 217; 66.

＊9 *Seidan* 政談 . In NST 36, p. 443.

＊10 *Rongochô* 論語徵 , ed. Ogawa Tamaki 小川環樹 . Tôyô Bunko 東洋文庫 edtn, 2 vols. Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1994, vol. 1, pp. 258-59.

＊11 Ishikawa Ken 石川謙 . 'Shôheizaka gakumonjo no hattatsu katei to sono yôshiki 昌平坂学問所の発達過程とその様式 . *Ochanomizu Joshi Daigaku jinbunkagaku kiyô* お茶の水女子大学人文科学紀要 , vol. 7 (1955) , p. 37.

＊12 Okada Chiaki 岡田千昭 . 'Motoori Norinaga no Matsudaira Sadanobu e no sekkin - Kansei no kaikaku to kanren shite 本居宣長の松平定信への接近－寛政の改革と関連して . In *Kinsei Nihon no seiji to gaikô* 近世日本の政治と外交 , comp. Fujino Tamotsu Sensei kanreki kinen kai 藤野保先生還暦記念会 . Tokyo: Yûzankaku, 1993, p. 377.

＊13 Text is in Sagara Tôru 相良享 ed. *Asami Keisai* 浅見絅斎 , *Keisai Sensei bunshû* 絅斎先生文集 近世儒家文集集成 , vol. 2, Tokyo: Perikansha ぺりかん社 , 1987, pp. 90-91. Rejoinders to Keisai's arguments are included in *Kôryô roku* 耕猟録 , maki 3, MS in *Kokkai Toshokan*. Much depends here on who Keisai has in mind with the category of 'commoners'. He himself revered the imperial structure; the contrast here is between 'middle antiquity' [Heian Japan] and the present; in contemporary perception, the Hayashi Academy retained the character of a private school; it may well be, therefore, that Keisai included contemporary warrior-supported or warrior-sponsored observances in his indictment. For a view of domain ceremonies as 'private' at the end of the period, see the Mito domain return to the Monbushô questionnaire (question on religious observances) sent in by the 'former domain lord': 'In general, in the court's system for the provincial schools (*kokugaku* 国学) they venerate the two altars of Confucius and Master Yan and, for Confucius, use the title 'Prince of universal culture'. Because our Academy [Kôdôkan 弘道館] basically partakes of a private school we do not necessarily follow the court system' (NKSS I, 345) .

＊14 Sadanobu's evolving views on religious worship at the Rikkyôkan can be seen in two sets of regulations that he wrote for the school. In 1791, on the occasion of the founding of schools for 'Learning' and for military training in Aizu chô 会津町 , Shirakawa 白河 , he drew up his *Rules for the Rikkyôkan* (*Rikkyôkan no sadame* 立教館之定 ; MS in Naikaku Bunko, appended to the *Urin Genkô den* 羽林源公伝 , by the head of the Rikkyôkan, Hirose Môsai 広瀬蒙齋 [1768-1829]; 請求番号 158 – 0420; I am grateful to Professor Zhu Quanan [Shu Zen'an] 朱全安 for help in gaining access to this material) . In this early text, Sadanobu merely specified the arrangement of the altar: in the middle a collection box (*ichimando no harae* 一万度之祓) and to the left of this the 'Legacy' (*Goikun* 御遺訓 attributed to Tokugawa Ieyasu) ; on the right side, the Confucian *Four books and five classics* (*Shisho gokyô* 四書五経) and to the right again, the *Kangaku kakun* 勧学家訓 by the founder of his domain, Matudaira Sadatsuna 松平定綱 (died 1651, *aet*. 61 *sai*) . In 1809, Sadanobu redrafted these regulations following a rebuilding of the school. His *Rikkyôkan reijô* 立教館令条 of 1809 retained basically the same altar arrangement but added an explicit note: 'With regard to not installing an image of the Sage, there should be no *sekiten* for ever the longest time (*naga naga* (NKSS, vol. 1, pp. 90-91) .

＊15 Okada, p. 398.

＊16 Herman Ooms, *Charismatic bureaucrat:a political biography of Matsudaira Sadanobu,* 1758-1829. University of Chicago Press, 1985, p. 35.

＊17 Ôgôri Shinsai 大郷信齋 . *Sekiten shigi* 釈奠私議 . Unpaginated MS in Diet Library (No. 136-25) , preface dated 1800, *kan* 4.

＊ 18 *Analects* VII, 6（3-4）; James Legge tr. The *Chinese classics*, 5 vols. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1960（reprint of Hong Kong and Oxford edtns. 1865-93; henceforward CC）, vol. 1, p. 196（adapted）.
＊ 19 *Sekiten ki* 釈奠記（*Kansei jûninen hachigatsu sekitenki* 寛政十二年八月 釈奠記）, quoted in Sudô Toshio 須藤敏夫 *Kinsei sekiten no kenkyû* 近世釈奠の研究 . Kyôto: Shibunkaku Shuppan, 2001, p. 147; cf. NKSS, vol. VII, p. 250.
＊ 20 Inutzuka Inami, p. 96.
＊ 21 The *dairei* 代礼 , in which a representative of the shogun processed to Yushima and presented a cash gift to the shrine, was performed on the preceding day. Moreover, it was precisely, by definition, a proxy ceremony. In this, it institutionalised a contrast with the fifth shogun's personal attendance at the shrine.
＊ 22 This theme is developed in Maruyama Masao. See Masao Maruyama. *Studies in the intellectual history of Tokugawa Japan,* tr. Mikiso Hane. Tokyo: University of Tokyo Press, 1974. , pp. 135-43.
＊ 23 Sagara Tôru 相良亨 . *Kinsei Nihon ni okeru Jukyô undô no keifu* 近世日本における儒教運動の系譜 . Tokyo: Risôsha, 1965, p. 234.
＊ 24 Maruyama, p. 137.
＊ 25 Ibid., p. 282.
＊ 26 Nakatani Unkan. *Sekiten kô* 釈奠考 . In NKSS, vol. 6, p. 2.
＊ 27 In the directives for *Engishiki*, Confucius himself, Yan Hui and nine other direct disciples of Confucius are venerated. Thus no figure after Confucius' own time is included.
＊ 28 Sudô, p. 180-81.
＊ 29 I.J. McMullen. 'The worship of Confucius in ancient Japan'. In P.F. Kornicki and I.J. McMullen eds. *Religion in Japan: arrows to Heaven and Earth*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996, p. 48.
＊ 30 Roy A Rappaport. *Ritual and religion in the making of humanity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999, p. 447.
＊ 31 Ibid., p. 445
＊ 32 Ibid.
＊ 33 Rappaport, p. 363
＊ 34 Ibid., p. 396.
＊ 35 Ibid., p. 396（italics original to text）.
＊ 36 Ibid., p. 419.
＊ 37 In fact, the last ceremony seems to have been that of autumn, 1867（Sudô, p. 183）.
＊ 38 *Zhojuan* 左傳 , Zhaogong 昭公 , year 25; CC vol. 5, p. 708.
＊ 39 'Katsuhiro ki ', quoted in Sudô, pp. 182-3.